

Photos by Lisa Gonzales

# Medical unit has many names—still only N.M. Air Force Reserve unit

BY MAJ. JUANA LABELLE  
704th Medical Squadron

Kirtland AFB is home to the 704th Medical Squadron, New Mexico's only Air Force Reserve unit.

The unit was activated as a geographically-separated unit on Oct. 1, 1983 and designated as 11th U.S. Air Force Contingency Hospital, Detachment 4, Lackland AFB, Texas.

It was made up of approximately 50 members from various civilian careers, ranging from students to nurses, surgeons and administrative personnel.

Over the years, this unit has undergone several redesignations. In 1986, the detachment was moved from the Texas hospital to the 12th U.S. Air Force Contingency Hospital, Travis AFB, Calif.

On Oct. 1, 1989, the unit received a deployable mission tasking. In November 1990, a group of members activated in support of Operation Desert Shield. Deployed to Davis Monthan AFB, Ariz.

In January 1991, the entire unit activated for Operation Desert Storm. A majority of its members deployed to Royal AF Nocton Hall, United Kingdom; the rest remained at David Grant Medical Center, Travis AFB, in support of active duty personnel deployed elsewhere.

In 1995 the unit became the 349th Contingency Hospital, Detachment 2, an asset of hospital at Travis AFB.

In 1999 it was redesignated as 349th Medical Squadron, Detachment 2 during a major Air Force Reserve Command reorganization.

In 2001, the unit mobilized members in support of Operations Northern and Southern Watch in Iraq.

In March 2003, it deployed 26 members in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, going from civilian status to active duty status and was in place within 18 hours of notification.

Nineteen members deployed overseas to Landstuhl, Germany, where they provided medical care to the seven repatriated U.S. prisoners of war. The seven that remained at Travis AFB, were on stand-by for immediate overseas deployment.

While at Travis AFB, these members enhanced their field training and updated their program knowledge.

These 26 members, along with other members in the 349th Medical Squadron, were the only Air Force Reserve Theater Hospital expansion team deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Twenty-five members returned home in August 2003. The last one returned November 2003.

This Air Force Reserve unit is exceptionally well-versed to change. Throughout its multiple redesignations, its size has varied, from about 50 to 150.

Currently, it comprises about 50 members (physicians, nurses, medical and ancillary service technicians, administrative and personnel staff) but will be expanding to about 100 personnel.

On July 1, 2003, the 349th Medical Squadron, Detachment 2 was redesignated the 704th Medical Squadron and became a stand-only medical unit. With this change comes a new tasking—the unit now supports the Expeditionary Medical Support mission.

Its reputation speaks to its members. Each and every one of them are leaders. Its training platforms are exemplary, providing training opportunities specific to trauma. On reserve weekends, its medical members train at University Hospital, New Mexico Regional Medical Center and the 377th Medical Group.

Members frequently train for nuclear, chemical and biological exposure, deployment, anti-terrorism, administration and personnel support issues.

During Annual Tour status, its members have deployed to Keesler AFB, Miss.; Nellis AFB, Nev.; Japan; Korea; Honduras and Hawaii.

Each host facility has recognized unit members for their expertise, flexibility and esprit de corps.

Since its existence, this AF Reserve medical unit has undergone numerous Health Services Inspections. Its most recent in July 2002 when the unit celebrated an outstanding score of 95 percent.

It continues to lead in its commitments to support the Air Force mission.



ABOVE RIGHT—Maj. Lisa Corso (medical readiness officer) prepares a mannequin for the next scenario. RIGHT—Members on the ground after receiving the “attack” message. FAR RIGHT—Master Sgt. Daniel Garcia (first sergeant) gives a “thumbs up,” indicating that members are accounted for. ABOVE—Tech. Sgt. James Sedillo (cardiopulmonary technician) hydrates himself before the next scenario occurs.



TOP LEFT—Unit participates in a Chemical Attack Response Exercise. Capt., Dr., Felipe Gutierrez intubates a patient while Maj. Debra Werner (nurse) and another 704th member oversee. TOP RIGHT—Capt., Dr., Jeff Barklow directs Tech. Sgts. Christopher Jaramillo (personnelist), Johathan Chavez (deployment manager), Christopher Mason (clinical training manager) and Jeffry Smith (cardiopulmonary technician) in getting a patient ready for aerovacuation. RIGHT—Master Sgt. Shannon Williams gets an intravenous solution ready, before influx of patients. ABOVE—Tech. Sgt. Jenni Trumble-loper inspects Master Sgt. Josefa Beck's chemical ensemble. Master Sgt. Shannon Williams stands in the background waiting for her turn.

